

Point Neighborhood Historic Resources Survey and Preservation Plan

Salem, Massachusetts

Prepared for	City of Salem, Department of Planning and Community Development Salem, Massachusetts
Prepared by	VHB /Vanassee Hangen Brustlin, Inc. Watertown, Massachusetts

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Executive Summary

The Point Neighborhood in Salem represents a fascinating historical and architectural period in the city's history. Settled as early as the 1850s, the neighborhood, historically known as Stage Point, was totally leveled in a devastating 1914 fire. The rebuilding of the neighborhood, largely accomplished in three years from 1914-1917, was the focus of a governor-appointed commission that was established days after the fire. The neighborhood's distinctive architecture is an important aspect of Salem's architectural heritage that deserves recognition, appreciation, and advocacy, and financial and technical assistance as described in the recommended components contained in this preservation plan.

Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB) was contracted by the City of Salem (City) to prepare a historic resources survey and preservation plan for the city's Point Neighborhood. The project was performed from March through September 2006. The project was conducted in four phases, which included two public meetings, separate meetings and conversations with stakeholders and property owners, and consultation with City staff and the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). Draft and final versions of all products were reviewed by the City and MHC.

Two major tasks required of this project were to prepare an inventory of the neighborhood through recodation on a Massachusetts Historical Commission Area Form and to provide recommendations on its eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. The current survey represents the most comprehensive and focused study of the historical and architectural significance of the neighborhood. A single Area Form was prepared for the entire neighborhood, which has over 295 properties. Based on the research and analysis performed for the form, VHB recommends that the neighborhood and an area west of Lafayette Street are eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for its association with the ambitious efforts of the Salem Rebuilding Commission to totally restore several neighborhoods after the Great Salem Fire of 1914. The historic district also meets Criterion C for its stock of buildings that reflect not only the stated physical requirements of the Commission's regulations, but the economic and social conditions in this largely French-Canadian community.



The preservation plan includes chapters on the current conditions in the neighborhood, a physical description and assessment of its historic and architectural significance, a description of possible programs and policies that would benefit preservation efforts in the neighborhood, and a series of recommendations and an action plan for accomplishing preservation goals.

The recommendations are to:

- Obtain National Register Historic District Listing for the Neighborhood
- Adopt the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act (CPA) for the City of Salem
- Strengthen the City of Salem's Demolition Delay Ordinance
- Establish a Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD) Ordinance for the City of Salem
- Establish a Demolition by Neglect Program for the City of Salem
- Revise Zoning to encourage more Residential, Commercial and Mixed Use Zoning
- Consider Vision Charette for Full Reuse of Shetland Park
- Encourage Donation of Preservation Restrictions throughout Salem
- Prepare Voluntary Design Guidelines
- Renew Programmatic Agreement with MHC for Section 106 review of HUD programs
- Encourage use of historic tax credits
- Provide Pre-development Financial and Technical Assistance Programs
- Seek, use and advertise new sources of private and public funding for preservation efforts
- Redevelop historic preservation section of City of Salem website
- Create illustrated brochure on neighborhood's history and architecture
- Establish walking tours of neighborhood
- Design and install outdoor interpretive signage and interpretive materials
- Create Maintenance Manual with reference material specific to Point Neighborhood
- Sponsor/ Coordinate Maintenance Workshops
- Create a Building Trades Program
- Emphasize Preservation Programs and Regulations in Building-related Programs and Regulations
- Support City of Salem's existing tree retention and planting programs in historic areas
- Establish Exterior Paint program
- Form a broad coalition of historic preservation/neighborhood groups to advocate for historic preservation in the Point Neighborhood

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